

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

WALTER M. DICKIE, M.D., Director

Weekly Bulletin



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GUY P. JONES
EDITOR

PLAGUE

(Continued from last issue)

The history of plague in California forms an interesting chapter in the story of public health in this far western state. The disease was first recognized in San Francisco in March of 1900. Its discovery provoked widespread comment with the expression upon the part of many influential individuals that the disease did not and could not possibly exist in this climate. The State Board of Health, however, admitted that the disease was present. Many leading newspapers and public men were determined in their belief that the disease did not exist in California and that if it were present the unfavorable publicity would wreck the state commercially. The State Board of Health shortly afterward reversed its opinion and declared that the disease was not plague. This aroused a storm of protest among health officers in eastern states. The agitation became so strong that the health authorities of twenty-one states requested the Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service to call a conference of state boards of health with the Service. Such a conference was called in January of 1903. Largely through the influence of the Surgeon General—of that time—the matter was left as unfinished business to be discussed at a future conference. Meanwhile, during the years 1900–1904, there had been 121 cases of plague with 115 deaths. Although nearly all of these cases and deaths had occurred in Chinatown, the general public began to be aroused over the situation. A new gov-

ernor of California was elected and through a technicality the Senate had failed to ratify the nominations for members of the State Board of Health, who were appointed by the preceding governor. This provided for the appointment of a new board of health which began its duties in April of 1903. The nation-wide agitation died down shortly afterward and since that time there has been no serious complaint relative to the measures that have been enforced in the control of this disease. In 1907 human plague appeared in San Francisco again and was not confined to Chinatown. Cases occurred at widely separated points throughout the city. From May, 1907, to November, 1908, there were 167 cases with 75 deaths. It must be remembered that a large portion of San Francisco was destroyed in the conflagration of April, 1906. It has never been determined whether the second epidemic was related to the first epidemic or whether a new focus of infection was involved. At this time cases also occurred in Oakland, Berkeley, Point Richmond and in the rural districts of Contra Costa County. One case of the disease occurred in 1908 in Los Angeles. A single infected squirrel was found in Los Angeles County at this time and it is possible that this rodent had been brought from the northern part of the state. From 1910 to 1914 cases of bubonic plague appeared in Alameda, Contra Costa, San Benito, Santa Clara, San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties. Four out of thirteen cases were fatal.

In September of 1919, fourteen cases of pneumonic plague occurred in Oakland, 13 of which were fatal. An Italian, taken suddenly ill with a tentative diagnosis of influenza, developed an axillary swelling and died within five days. A second case similar to the first occurred in the same house. In quick succession other contacts, including nurses and physicians, came down with the disease. Later investigation developed the fact that the first patient, a short time before the onset of his disease, had shot ground squirrels in the foothills of Alameda County, bringing them home where they were prepared for eating. For many years ground squirrels had been considered gastronomic delicacies in San Francisco and Oakland, commanding prices from 75 cents to \$1.25 a dozen. The practice of eating them has long since been discontinued.

From 1920 to October, 1924, six cases of bubonic plague occurred in Alameda, Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties. All proved fatal, with the exception of one. In October of 1924 a second epidemic of pneumonic plague occurred in Los Angeles. There were 32 cases, with 30 deaths. The first case was in a Mexican woman who maintained a rooming and boarding house. She died after an illness of four days. Her husband and a practical nurse who had attended her were taken ill shortly afterward and died. The cause of death was given as lobar pneumonia. A few days following these deaths it was reported that a number of Mexicans living in this district were severely ill. The ambulance driver who removed cases to the hospital, the priest who administered the last rites, nurses at the hospital and contacts with these patients developed the disease in rapid sequence. Relatives of patients in outlying districts who had been contacts also developed pneumonic plague. An area covering eight city blocks occupied by 1800 people was quarantined. Rations were distributed and a laboratory was established within the quarantined area. A large staff of physicians and nurses covered the entire district twice daily, investigating all cases of illness and enforcing stringent control measures. Hospitalization was compulsory for all suspicious cases and contacts. An intensive campaign for the eradication of rats and ground squirrels followed this outbreak. The campaign was carried into the rural districts and into the harbor district as well. Plague-infected ground squirrels were proved in both the city and rural districts but wherever infected squirrels were found they were taken from hog ranches where plague had been demonstrated in rats. This outbreak was an incentive for the maintenance of rodent control measures in all large cities within the state. The campaign against

the rat is expensive and it is never easy. It constitutes not only an attack upon the habitation but also upon the food supply of the rodent. Not only are burrows and nests destroyed but buildings are rendered rat-proof through concreting and screening. As a routine measure, poisons and traps are used.

Since 1927 the California State Department of Public Health has maintained a rodent plague survey. This has operated in most of the counties of the state. A crew equipped with shotguns and materials for dissection invades suspected territory. Rodents that may be shot or found dead are dissected in the field. Those that show gross evidence of infection are withheld and the suspicious organs packed in ice are shipped to the laboratory for examination. Since the L. A. outbreak of 1924-1925, only 9 human cases with 5 deaths have occurred in California. Since the rodent survey was started in 1927, however, 759 positive cases of plague in rodents have been found. These are distributed as follows:

Ground squirrels	745
Rats	5
Other rodents	9

CASES IN OTHER STATES

Human plague has appeared in other states and in British Columbia at various times since 1907. In that year 2 cases occurred in Vancouver, and 3 cases as well as 2 suspected cases in Seattle. A suspected case occurred in the state of Washington again in 1913. Fifty cases of the disease were reported from New Orleans during the years 1914, 1915, 1919 and 1920. Texas reported 31 cases and Florida 10 cases during 1920. It is apparent, then, that California is not the only state in which human plague has occurred.

The plague situation in California at the present time may be regarded as important but not critical. During the past few years, for the first time, infected rodents have been proved in neighboring western states and two human cases have been reported recently within such states. It is probable, however, that the infection has existed in these commonwealths for a long period of years. For the reason that plague has persisted in the wild rodents of California for more than 36 years, it is reasonable to assume that the rodent infection has not been confined to California alone. There is even a possibility that plague occurred on this western coast long before the arrival of the white man. While it is true that pneumonic plague is greatly to be feared and past experience has proved that the disease may occur here in epidemic form, there is little occasion for alarm upon the part of any citizens or organizations. The United States

Public Health Service and the California State Board of Public Health are active in maintaining provisions for determining a reliable index of infection and it is believed that through the application of this index any unfavorable conditions may be revealed without delay. There can be no denial that plague is endemic in the ground squirrels of California but until such time as conditions show a decided change there is no reason why the situation should be regarded with undue concern.

MACARONI FACTORIES

All the macaroni factories were inspected in San Francisco and a search made for imported eggs. In one instance, a barrel was found of dried Chinese egg yolks with the words "product of China" scratched off the barrel so that the party using it did not know that it was imported. Thus defeating the purpose of the law requiring all products in which it is used to be labeled "imported eggs used."

I hope that here in America more and more the ideal of the well-trained and vigorous body will be maintained neck and neck with that of the well-trained and vigorous mind, as the two coequal halves of the higher education for men and women alike. The strength of the British Empire lies in the strength of character of the individual Englishman taken all alone by himself. And that strength, I am persuaded, is perennially nourished and kept up by nothing so much as by the national worship, in which all classes meet, of athletic outdoor life and sport.—William James (1890).

OLIVE OIL

A lot of 125 gallons of so-called olive oil, which was admitted to be a blend of olive and cottonseed oils, was released from quarantine after the cans were labeled "imitation olive oil" and another lot of 100 gallons in 5-gallon tins is still held pending labeling of "imitation" by the owners.

Our chief enemies at present are heart disease, cancer, pneumonia, tuberculosis and syphilis. If the full facts were known, as Dr. Osler said, syphilis would probably come first. Syphilis is the biggest killing disease in the community. It and tuberculosis are undoubtedly the greatest present contributors to the total mortality prior to the approach of old age. By the removal of tuberculosis and syphilis most of the preventable deaths from the age of 15 to 65 would be avoided.—Sir Arthur Newsholme, M.D.

WINE SURVEY

Inspectors in Southern California have been assigned to each area in which wine is held in quarantine. Each winery has been contacted with reference to disposing of wine held under quarantine. Following a policy for releasing wine under quarantine, stocks with a high volatile acidity have been distilled and those in which the volatile acid would permit blending have been allowed to be blended. Inspectors have been assigned to witness any operation in which quarantined wine is being handled.

In the case of distilling material, properly notarized affidavits are on file before any wine is released for distilling.

In the San Bernardino-Riverside county district the total amount released was 163,866 gallons of which 34,847 gallons were distilled. The balance had been blended with suitable wine to make the resultant blend conform to the adopted wine standards. 50,170 gallons of wine held in Fresno were blended to conform to standards. In the Escondido district 8473 gallons were released, of which 2786 gallons were distilled.

Practically every winery in the south has been crushing and due to manufacturing of new wine, little attention has been given to quarantined wine except in cases where the cooperage is needed to store the new wine.

Routine complaints have been investigated and samples of wine inspected as being substandard have been obtained.

The wine industry has continued to voice its approval of the wine standardization program.

A continuation of winery inspections in the northern part of the state was made this month and two large lots of wine amounting to over 70,000 gallons intended for sale was quarantined. These two lots were very high in volatile acid and if allowed to be put on the market would have seriously affected the demand for wines by a large portion of the public.

A considerable amount of wine that has been under quarantine has been disposed of for distilling material, and several lots of wine just over the border in re-standard of purity have been blended with good wine, and brought up to the California standard for wines.

A case was prosecuted in court of a wine dealer accused of selling substandard wine of such poor quality that he was sentenced to 90 days in jail and suspended on condition that he destroy 6934 gallons of dry muscat wine involved, which was done.

There are steps in education that can be taken only after one has gained some measure of experience.—Leon J. Richardson.

MORBIDITY

Complete Reports for Following Diseases for Week Ending
November 21, 1936

Chickenpox

452 cases: Alameda County 11, Alameda 6, Albany 1, Berkeley 5, Hayward 7, Oakland 30, Pleasanton 3, San Leandro 4, Colusa 1, Antioch 4, Pittsburg 1, Fresno County 30, Fowler 1, Fresno 1, Humboldt County 10, Eureka 10, Kern County 5, Bakersfield 5, Kings County 2, Los Angeles County 54, Azusa 1, Burbank 1, El Monte 4, Long Beach 9, Los Angeles 32, Monrovia 1, Pasadena 3, San Marino 2, Whittier 1, South Gate 1, Marin County 1, San Rafael 15, Mono County 2, Monterey 2, Grass Valley 1, Orange County 5, Anaheim 1, Riverside County 3, Riverside 1, Sacramento County 2, Sacramento 8, Ontario 3, Redlands 1, San Diego County 5, Coronado 1, San Diego 4, San Francisco 21, San Joaquin County 7, Stockton 1, San Luis Obispo County 31, San Luis Obispo 1, Burlingame 3, Daly City 2, Santa Barbara County 9, Santa Clara County 5, Mountain View 2, Palo Alto 1, San Jose 4, Watsonville 1, Shasta County 4, Vallejo 1, Oakdale 5, Yuba City 1, Tulare County 5, Ventura County 30, Fillmore 5, Santa Paula 3, Yolo County 1, Woodland 1, Marysville 1.

Diphtheria

62 cases: Oakland 4, Imperial County 1, El Centro 2, Kern County 1, Los Angeles County 1, Azusa 1, Burbank 1, Los Angeles 19, Monrovia 1, Ukiah 1, Orange County 1, Fullerton 1, Huntington Beach 1, Placer County 2, Riverside County 1, Corona 2, Sacramento County 3, Sacramento 1, San Diego 4, San Joaquin County 2, San Luis Obispo County 2, Lompoc 1, Santa Barbara 1, Sonoma County 1, Turlock 1, Yuba City 1, Ventura County 3, Fillmore 1, Oxnard 1.

German Measles

18 cases: Alameda 1, Berkeley 2, Oakland 1, Contra Costa County 1, Los Angeles 2, Pasadena 1, Santa Monica 1, Torrance 1, Riverside County 1, Riverside 1, Sacramento 3, San Diego 1, San Francisco 2.

Influenza

47 cases: Oakland 1, Calaveras County 1, Fresno County 1, Orland 2, Kern County 3, Lake County 1, Lassen County 1, Susanville 4, Los Angeles County 5, Compton 1, El Monte 1, Los Angeles 20, South Gate 1, Monterey Park 1, Brea 2, San Francisco 1, San Jose 1.

Malaria

2 cases: Yuba County.

Measles

37 cases: Albany 1, Chico 1, Eureka 1, Susanville 1, Los Angeles County 6, Los Angeles 3, Grass Valley 19, Nevada City 1, San Diego 1, San Francisco 1, Ventura County 1, California 1.*

Mumps

564 cases: Alameda County 1, Alameda 4, Berkeley 4, Hayward 1, Oroville 15, Pittsburg 4, Richmond 1, Fresno County 11, Fresno 2, Orland 14, Willows 35, Eureka 17, Kern County 25, Bakersfield 1, Los Angeles County 41, Alhambra 12, Arcadia 1, Burbank 3, Claremont 1, Compton 2, El Segundo 1, Huntington Park 3, Long Beach 3, Los Angeles 43, Monrovia 1, Pasadena 8, Redondo 1, Santa Monica 7, South Pasadena 5, Whittier 5, Lynwood 1, Hawthorne 3, South Gate 13, Bell 3, Marin County 1, Merced County 3, Monterey 1, Orange County 15, Brea 1, Orange 3, Santa Ana 17, Riverside County 30, Corona 1, Riverside 18, Sacramento 24, Ontario 1, San Bernardino 3, San Diego County 14, Coronado 5, Escondido 2, National City 4, San Diego 31, San Francisco 23, San Joaquin County 1, Stockton 2, Santa Barbara County 4, Santa Barbara 9, Santa Maria 1, San Jose 3, Watsonville 2, Oakdale 4, Ventura County 23, Fillmore 10, Oxnard 1, Santa Paula 4, Yolo County 4, Davis 1, Woodland 1, Marysville 5.

Pneumonia (Lobar)

64 cases: Colusa 1, Contra Costa County 1, Westmoreland 1, Lassen County 4, Los Angeles County 6, Alhambra 1, Azusa 1, Burbank 1, Huntington Park 1, Los Angeles 20, South Gate 1, Merced County 1, Huntington Beach 1, Placentia 1, Sacramento County 3, Sacramento 5, San Diego County 1, San Diego 1, San Francisco 8, San Joaquin County 1, Lodi 1, San Bruno 1, Yreka 1, Stanislaus County 1.

Scarlet Fever

278 cases: Alameda County 2, Hayward 1, Oakland 8, Butte County 3, Chico 1, Contra Costa County 2, Walnut Creek 4, Fresno County 6, Orland 1, Humboldt County 1, Eureka 3, Imperial County 2, Holtville 1, Kern County 9, Bakersfield 1, Lassen County 7, Los Angeles County 16, Alhambra 1, Arcadia 2, Huntington Park 1, Inglewood 1, La Verne 3, Long Beach 6, Los Angeles 32, Pasadena 2, Pomona 1, Santa Monica 1, Tor-

rance 2, Hawthorne 2, West Covina 1, South Gate 2, Bell 1, Madera County 1, Madera 2, Mariposa County 3, Merced County 3, Merced 7, Napa County 1, Napa 2, Orange County 6, Anaheim 1, Brea 2, Fullerton 1, Santa Ana 1, Placer County 12, Auburn 3, Riverside County 4, Corona 1, Sacramento 22, San Diego County 2, La Mesa 2, National City 1, San Diego 5, San Francisco 20, San Joaquin County 2, Stockton 1, Tracy 4, Burlingame 4, Redwood City 1, Lompoc 1, Santa Barbara 2, Santa Clara County 2, Los Gatos 2, Palo Alto 3, San Jose 5, Santa Clara 2, Sunnyvale 2, Benicia 1, Vallejo 5, Stanislaus County 4, Modesto 1, Tulare County 2, Ventura County 4, Oxnard 1, Yolo County 1.

Smallpox

One case: Madera County.

Typhoid Fever

9 cases: Butte County 1, Bakersfield 1, Los Angeles County 2, Pasadena 1, Vacaville 1, Turlock 1, Sutter County 1, Tulare County 1.

Whooping Cough

277 cases: Alameda 3, Berkeley 2, Hayward 2, Oakland 27, Contra Costa County 6, Richmond 5, Fresno County 6, Fresno 3, Kern County 1, Los Angeles County 36, Los Angeles 53, Montebello 2, Pasadena 1, Santa Monica 8, Sierra Madre 4, Whittier 2, Monterey Park 1, Marin County 1, Merced County 2, Placentia 1, Placer County 3, Riverside County 16, Corona 2, Sacramento 5, San Diego County 6, Escondido 2, Oceanside 4, San Diego 13, San Francisco 23, San Joaquin County 5, San Luis Obispo County 6, San Luis Obispo 1, San Mateo County 1, Santa Barbara County 3, Santa Barbara 3, Santa Maria 3, Santa Clara County 4, Tehama County 2, Exeter 7, Ventura County 2.

Meningitis (Epidemic)

7 cases: Butte County 1, Imperial County 1, Los Angeles 1, Signal Hill 1, Monterey County 1, San Diego 1, San Joaquin County 1.

Dysentery (Amoebic)

One case: Los Angeles.

Dysentery (Bacillary)

8 cases: Butte County 1, Humboldt County 1, Los Angeles 1, Red Bluff 1, Yuba County 4.

Poliomyelitis

9 cases: Oakland 1, Bakersfield 1, Culver City 1, Huntington Park 1, Long Beach 1, Los Angeles 2, Anaheim 1, San Francisco 1.

Trachoma

6 cases: Madera County.

Paratyphoid Fever

One case: San Francisco.

Food Poisoning

One case: Westmoreland.

Undulant Fever

2 cases: Los Angeles County 1, Monrovia 1.

Pellagra

One case: Los Angeles County.

Coccidioidal Granuloma

2 cases: Kern County 1, San Joaquin County 1.

Septic Sore Throat (Epidemic)

2 cases: Oakland 1, Lake County 1.

Rabies (Animal)

19 cases: El Cerrito 1, El Centro 1, Los Angeles County 3, Alhambra 1, Inglewood 1, Long Beach 3, Los Angeles 2, Lynwood 2, Monterey County 1, Riverside County 1, Riverside 1, Hollister 1, San Bernardino 1.

The social order changes. Only those who think are not left behind by the on-rolling globe.—Leon J. Richardson.

* Cases charged to "California" represent patients ill before entering the state or those who contracted their illness traveling about the state throughout the incubation period of the disease. These cases are not chargeable to any one locality.

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